The Boy, Bobolink, Butterflies and Bees

BY C. B. LOOMIS.

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Once upon a time there was a little boy and his name was John Saltonstall, and he lived in a village called West Woodstock. Now this village is in the mighty state of Connecticut.

John Saltonstall was a poor orphan, but he was of such a happy disposition that his lot was not as hard as that of most orphans, because there was not a family in the village who was not glad to keep John over night and give him two meals just to hear his merry laugh and his melodious whistle. And he was a willing boy, too, and many is the wood pile that has grown up by the sound of his saw and many are the weeds that have perished ingloriously, thanks to his stubby fingers.

Heaved a Piece of Earth at Him.

Now, when he was 8 years old a wicked and mean man, whose name was Milford Farwell and who "farmed it" about three miles out of Woodstock, took it into his wicked head that he must have a hired boy. And this was less because he needed help than because he wanted to have some one to hector and tease. So he sought out John and asked him if he'd like a nice home and all the comforts of farm life, and happy little John smiled one of his smiles and laughed one of his laughs and said yes.

The next day John left the old carpenter shop, where he had been sleeping for some time past, and walked out to Farwell's place, which is near Pomfret. He found it to be an uninviting looking farm of some sixty acres. There was a big two-story house connected with a wood shed, and a carriage house, a barn and ten hen houses, all sadly in need of paint.

That night John had a supper of milk and went to bed without having been scolded, but early the next morning—at daybreak—Mr. Farwell came up to the attic and called him with a rough "Here, you drowse-a-bed, what am I feedin' and clothin' you fer, I'd like t' know, ef it ain't thet you may work fer me. Git up an' come out doors an' earn yer breakfast."

John rose and dressed, smiling all the while at the rough words of Mr. Farwell, for he supposed that he was jesting.

But Farwell never jested, and as soon as the boy was out of doors he heaved a piece of earth at him and said: "I want my ten-acre patch of corn hoed before breakfast. Ef tisn't done, no breakfast."

John seized the hoe and ran, laughing, to the lot, but I know of no boys who could do such a job before breakfast, unless breakfast were postponed several days, and then I'm sure they could not do it.

However, John set bravely to work, and after he had done one row a bobolink perched on his hoe handle and began singing, and although the boy had never understood bird language before he now knew that the bird was saying:

"Keep on laughing while you hoe,
I will do the rest, you know."

So John kept on hoeing and laughing and whistling and the hoe traveled so fast that he could hardly keep up with it. He followed it up with his hands on the handle and before you could say Jack Robinson he had hoed ten long rows, and when Mr. Farwell came up to trounce him for not doing his work, John had finished the job and was blowing on a blade of grass.

Mr. Farwell was so surprised that he forgot to be angry, and he told the boy to go into the house and eat his breakfast and be quick about it, as he wasn't going to keep him in idleness.

John had chased the hoe so hard that he had a good appetite and he quickly made an end of the popcorn and milk that served for his breakfast.

The meal over, he wandered out into the kitchen to see if there was anyone to talk to, for he was a sociable little fellow. But there was no one. The breakfast had not needed cooking. Mr. Farwell popped enough corn to last a week and so saved the expense of a hired girl and he lived all alone. Indeed, no one would have dared to live with him except John, who was too light-hearted to realize what fear was.

Farwell had breakfasted as soon as he had arisen, and he now came in and found John in the kitchen. "Here, I didn't tell you you could snoop all over my house. If you're through with your breakfast go out and clear my four-acre lot of stumps. I've been meaning to do it for years, but I've never had the time nor the strength. Get it done by noon or you'll have no lunch, but a whipping."

John laughed long and loud. Then he said: "It's easy to work for a man who makes my work so light and who feeds me so well." For John was desperately fond of popcorn and milk and thought it better than meat any day.

He walked gaily out to the lot where the stumps were lying. He whistled like a thrush as he went, but when he saw the size of the lot and the number of oak stumps he was troubled. However, it was not like him to give up at the outset, so he seized his hoe and bravely tackled the first stump. He hoed the earth from around it and then he picked up a crowbar and tried to pry the stump out of its earthy bed, but the poor child might as well have tried to throw the earth at the sun. The stump wouldn't budge. But he didn't cry or sit down in despair. He simply whistled a new tune and tackled the job again. While he labored, singing and whistling by turns, a beautiful butterfly

A Beautiful Butterfly Settled Upon the Crowbar.

flew up to him and settled upon the crowbar, and in an instant it became as light as a feather in his hands, for, of course, there are few things as light as a butterfly, and if a heavy butterfly would have made the crowbar heavier, it would stand to reason that a light butterfly would make it lighter.

But a light crowbar is not as serviceable as a heavy one, and John saw the lightness was in the wrong place, so he said very gently—he was always kind to animals—"If you please, Miss Butterfly, I think that if you'd flutter down to the stump it would help me more than it does to make the crowbar light." The butterfly nodded her wings and flew upon the stump and in a moment it became so light that John pulled it out of the ground and cast it aside as easily as if it had been a turnip. So the butterfly fluttered from stump to stump, followed by John, who first dug

John Sat On the Pyramid.

the earth from around them and then yanked them out with ease, and by 11 o'clock he had cleared the whole field and had piled the stumps up in a pyramid sixty feet high.

Promptly at 12 Mr. Farwell came out to the lot looking like a cross giant. He was very tall and his face was ugly and wrinkled in the places that indicate selfishness and cruelty. He was growling and grumbling and inwardly chuckling because he knew that he'd have the fun of thrashing John in about two minutes. He did not see the boy at first, but, hearing him whistle, he looked up, and there sat John on the apex of the pyramid, smiling like a Cheshire cat. Well, even Farwell's ill-nature was not proof against that, and he burst out into a harsh laugh and said: "You're the best boy to work I ever saw. Come down now and we'll have lunch."

Lunch consisted of milk and popcorn. After it was finished Mr. Farwell said: "I have bought 300 fowls of Edson Larrabee and I want you to fetch 'em over this afternoon. If you get 'em here by nightfall you can have some supper. If you're later than 6 I'll wallop you and send you to bed without a mouthful to eat."

John always liked to work among hens and he never borrowed trouble, so he said: "I'll go at once. Shall I hitch up and get 'em or shall I lead 'em?"

"Hitch up? Why, there's 300 on 'em and they're of three different breeds. Wagon wouldn't half hold 'em. They must be led back, and if you mix 'em up I'll mix you up so hard you won't know your hands from your feet."

Now, Farwell thought he had set John an impossible job. He was aching to trounce the boy and would have done so long before if it hadn't been for his infectious laugh. That seemed to render him incapable of his usual meanness. However, he was sure that the boy would not be able to bring back even ten of the hens, and he rubbed his hands together in anticipation of the fun he would have in beating the poor little orphan at 6 o'clock.

John sat out with a light heart. The greatest writer that ever lived has told us:

A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a.

And so it was with John. He made nothing of the ten miles to Ed Larrabee's, and when he came to the house he gave a loud yippoo and Ed came to the front door. "Hello, Mr. Larrabee," said John. "I have come to lead home the fowls that Mr. Farrell has bought."

"Lead 'em? Why, man alive—or, rather, boy alive—ther's 300 of 'em an' they ain't sheep. And you don't lead sheep—outside of the good book."

"Well, it won't do any harm to try to do it," said John, manfully. And so they went out to the hen houses. There were 100 Plymouth Rocks and 100 light Brahmas and 100 brown Leghorns.

John knew something about fowls and so he tackled the Brahmas first. They are sober and tractable—for hens—and he thought that if he could get them to marching that their example might be followed by the others, even the flighty Leghorns. But hens are hens, I grieve to say, and they were never intended for soldiers, and after John had let out the hundred big Brahmas from the pens where they had been cooped for days, they were so glad to get to grass that they scattered in a dozen directions.

Some boys would have sat down in despair, but John clucked gently to them and whistled a pretty tune and they soon saw they had nothing to fear from him. Still, they didn't propose to be led by him or by any other merry heart.

But if hens have a weakness—and they have a thousand—it is a liking for raw meat, and John bethought him of that fact and then it was as easy as pie as far as the Brahmas and Plymouth Rocks were concerned. He tied scraps of meat at the end of strings, and, mounting Larrabee's son's bicycle, he dangled the meat at the end of a long pole and the hens made a dash for the meat and followed it on the run all the way to Farwell's pens, where they got it—not before. He led the Plymouth Rocks in the same way, although he set them a faster pace than he had thought good for the heavy Brahmas and then he returned to lead the Leghorns. But when he let the Brown Leghorns out they flew all over the four acre lot and he saw that the meat plan wouldn't work with them. And it was getting close to 6 o'clock, a job for a whole one, as Mr. Larrabee kindly explained to him.

But the bobolink and the butterfly had been watching him and they whispered to a wandering bee.

And that is why a hundred handsome bumble bees appeared, each with a kernel of yellow corn in his talons. Talons doesn't sound right, but how could a bee hold a kernel of corn without talons? Each bee poised himself in front of a Leghorn and as yellow corn excites a hen as much as yellow gold excites a human, those fowls followed the corn and the corn was borne to Farwell's place as fast as the bees could fly with their heavy loads. It was just a quarter to 6 when the last Leghorn entered the yards and then John fastened the gates and went into the house. Not a hen had been mixed up.

Farwell had been preparing some switches out in the barn and he had not noticed what had happened. He came into the house, glanced at the clock and then saw John reading a newspaper.

He was speechless with surprise. The idea of the boy daring to sit there when his work was unfinished; for of course he must have failed in his Herculean task. The evening breeze brought an unwonted sound of crowing. Farwell hadn't kept chickens in years. The heavy, full challenge of a Brahma

The Hens Made a Dash For the Meat.

rooster was followed by the saucy and florid answer of a Leghorn cockerel. Farwell turned on his heels and walked out to the hen house. John followed him with an unsuspicious mind.

Farwell looked in at the different doors of the hen houses and saw the scores of beautiful birds, the matronly Brahmas, the sober Plymouth Rocks and the nervous and jaunty Leghorns. And then and there a miracle occurred for Milford Farwell, the meanest, cruelest man in Windham county, dropped his switches, turned and shook hands with John and said, "Boy you're just the feller I've been lookin' fer. I cal'lated to half murder you before I got through with yer, jest fer devilitry, but a boy that can work as you do an' keep gay over it ain't goin' ter be hurt by me—nor any one else, neither."

And the John began to blubber—foolish boy.

tion which rises spontaneously to the lips.

"Oh, you see," replied Mr. Buller, "I went to one of those fellows you call a ticket broker and explained to him that I wanted to go into the country."

"Where do you want to go?" asked the ticket broker.

"I really don't know, and don't much care, either," replied Mr. Buller, "provided it is a nice, quiet place, with a good winter climate."

"Ah, then you had better go to San Diego," promptly suggested the ticket broker. "How many of you are in the party?"

By this time that ticket broker should be the president of a railroad.

"Six."

One can imagine a slight twitching about the corners of the lips of the ticket broker, as he emphatically replied: "Oh, yes, San Diego is the right place for you. You must go to San Diego."

"Is it far away?" innocently asked the prospective traveler.

"Oh, no," replied the ticket broker. "Not very far. Pleasant journey at this time of the year. Nice country all around there, too," and he at once made out six tickets for San Diego over the most expensive route.

"And do you know," says Mr. Buller, "we were six days getting to the confounded place. These Americans have the most extraordinary ideas of going into the country. Where do they go when they contemplate a real journey, I wonder. It must be nowhere short of the moon."

Having once got into the country, however, Mr. Buller finds it difficult to retrace his steps to town; for the price of six transcontinental tickets, to be saved out of an allowance, always spent three months in advance, is a problem which would tax the ability of the most expert financier.

Not that he appears to be altogether displeased with his country life, for in the intervals in the bouts of his fencing classes, he is able to tell an attentive group of young ladies many a bon mot tale of the London "Upper Ten Thousand" of twenty years ago, with the moral added of the folly of any man with only £10,000 a year attempting to sit on the box of a fast traveling coach with a certain exalted personage at his side.

AN INSECT CALCULATOR.

There is a little insect found in New Caledonia called the "insect which counts," and which seems capable of counting to at least six. It is found on the leaves of the banana tree and when the moment is favorable it may be seen to turn around, with its head as a center, in describing rapid circles. At first it executes six of them, not one more or one less, then it reverses the movement and makes the same number in an opposite direction. It stops a moment and begins again, but only makes five this time, always alternatively in opposite directions. Another stop, then double rotation in alternative ways, the turns this time being only four, and so on, diminishing constantly in such a way as successively three, then two, and at last one single turn.

After these gymnastic exercises, which are at the same time mathematical, the insect remains absolutely motionless, until its agitation again takes possession of it and it gives itself up to its complicated calculations with an exactitude which many people might envy.

SIR REDVERS BULLER'S NEPHEW

Former Life Guardsman Now a Fencing Master In California.

Curious, indeed, is the fate which has finally carried Charles Buller, a nephew of Sir Redvers Buller, commander-in-chief of the British forces in South Africa, to a little hut on Coronado Beach, southern California, to become a teacher of fencing and boxing.

Twenty years ago no man was better known in the fashionable and sporting worlds of London than the handsome and accomplished Charles Buller, an officer in the Life Guards, a bosom friend of the Prince of Wales, champion amateur boxer of England and three times a member of the crack gentlemen team of cricket players.

"A man to keep up such a pace," says Mr. Buller, "requires at least £20,000 a year. I had only £10,000 of annual income, therefore, the inevitable result—California." Asked how it was that he came to choose the edge of the Pacific ocean in the extreme limits of southern California, as a secluded retreat from persons over anxious as to the state of his health, Mr. Buller replied that it came about in the most natural way possible.

Having at last decided that New York would be a pleasant place of temporary residence, he arrived in the metropolis of the United States three or four years since, and, as he explains, found it a most interesting city to visit; where, in fact, it was possible to spend so much money that, at last, it became absolutely necessary to betake his family into the country for a period of financial recuperation.

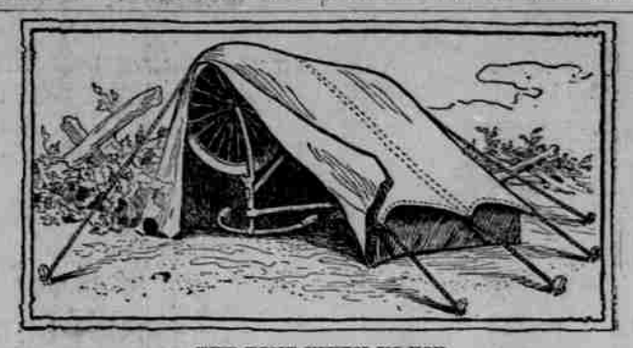
"But why to California?" is the question which rises spontaneously to the lips.

HANDY BICYCLE TENT.

A tent to cover both rider and bicycle while touring may seem an idle fancy, but a simple waterproof covering which anyone may make and carry without difficulty was found very serviceable by the writer in a trip made from New York to Quebec. This tent may be erected in less than three minutes, the bicycle acting as uprights and ridge pole, and, when rolled up may be strapped back of the saddle or upon the handle bars, making a package or roll about three inches in diameter and ten in length.

It may be constructed of any material which will shed water when stretched out—of course the thinner and lighter the better. Gossamer cloth has many desirable features—the thinness of the material ensures compactness, its non-absorbance of moisture allows the tent to be packed up without having to wait for it to dry after exposure to dampness with no danger of its mildewing. This rubber cloth may be purchased for from 25 cents a yard upwards.

To make this portable house, turn the bicycle upside down, allowing it to rest on the saddle and handle bars, and measure the distance from the floor to the highest point of either of the wheels. Double the height of the wheel, add to the result twenty-nine inches and cut two pieces of the material each the above length. Unite these side by side, overlapping half an inch. Turn up a hem half an inch at each end. You have now a piece of cloth six feet wide and more or less nine feet long, according to the height of the wheel. As the tent is to have a wall for protection on each side, measure eighteen inches from one hem and double the cloth upon itself, making a flap an inch in width upon the outer surface of the fabric. Three rings may now be fastened to this flap, one at each extreme end and one in the center, to which cords can be attached eight feet in length. To the opposite hem, rings and loops, four in number, may be securely attached, eighteen inches apart. Midway between this edge and the flap, is the ridge of the tent, which should be reinforced on the inside by an extra piece of cloth two inches in width and four feet long. On each end of this strip, fasten two rings, one on each corner. These will, therefore, be two inches apart. As the covering is now placed in position over the wheel, the rings of the reinforcing strip should straddle the rubber tires at their greatest distance from the ground. It will be noticed at this juncture that a portion of the roof of the tent between the wheels is without support. To overcome this fault attach strong cords to the two rings on each end of the reinforcement strip, and join them six inches from the rings into one cord for each end. The top of the tent may be made rig.. by these two guy lines to be secured to stakes in the ground, in the same manner as those on the side. Trout line will be most serviceable.



THE TENT WHEN IN USE.

These flaps or doors of the front and back can be cut and fitted with ease while the tent is standing. Leave a slit directly in front of the wheel so the flaps may be thrown backwards upon the roof, out of the way, upon entering or leaving. When closed they may be fastened securely by strings or tape attached to the two edges. Those delighting in trips through wild districts, or where shelter is not readily found, will see at once the usefulness of this novelty, if only in protection from thunder storms. The ordinary tent, with its poles and stakes, of course, has no place in the bicyclist's outfit.

Compare the usual back country roadside tavern, its stuffy room and questionable bed with the bicycle tent and campfire of the true sportsman sleeping to the music of a trout stream and breathing good, fresh air.

Are Diamonds Really Alive?

(New York Journal.)

The rather startling statement is made that diamonds are alive. It is certain that some precious stones are affected by the health of the wearer. Pearls and opals are both said to grow dull through the ill-health of those by whom they are worn, and the turquoise is said to become pale from the same cause. We have heard from excellent authority that a ruby ring which on the hand of an invalid went paler and paler, until, on the patient's death, the stones lost their color entirely. Pearls are extraordinarily sensitive to the condition of the skin on which they rest. An example of this fact is shown by an episode of which a lady greatly desired to possess a pearl necklace, and her husband bought her a very beautiful one. A month or two afterward, however, the pearls began to lose their lustre, and he took the necklace back to the jeweler who sold it to him. The salesman admitted the deterioration.

"You are quite right," he said, "but the truth is that your wife cannot wear pearls next to her skin. Let her maid wear the necklace for a few weeks, and the pearls will regain their brilliancy."

A pearl dies as actually as a flower, though its life is a great deal longer, and all its color and brilliancy disappear. Its average life is impossible to estimate, as some pearls are known to be hundreds of years old; but it is probable that the life of others is far shorter.

The Cheerful Idiot.

(Indianapolis Journal.)

"When melancholy marks a man for her own," asked the smart border, "how does she mark him?"

"Colors him blue, of course," replied the Cheerful Idiot, in scorn.